United Nations ESCAP/RFSD/2018/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 February 2018

Original: English

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok, 28–30 March 2018
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region

Synthesis report on the voluntary national reviews submitted by Asia-Pacific countries at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017

Note by the secretariat**

Summary

The present document contains a summary of the main messages of the voluntary national reviews submitted by countries from the Asia-Pacific region in 2017 and collected in the section on the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform website. This synthesis also covers the 2016 voluntary national review reports from the region. General characteristics and commonalities within the region with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are highlighted and an outline is given of policy measures and institutional mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans and strategies, follow-up and review processes and means of implementation. Also addressed in the document are the challenges that the submitting countries of the 2017 voluntary national reviews face in several areas of the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda, such as data collection and analysis and financing mechanisms, and the response of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to these challenges.

I. Introduction

1. Follow-up and review are critical for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The roles, importance and guiding principles of follow-up and review are clearly highlighted in the 2030 Agenda, which provide for a three-tiered follow-up and review process at the national, regional and global levels.

* ESCAP/RFSD/2018/L.1.

** The present document was submitted late owing to the need to incorporate additional inputs.

Please recycle

2. In contributing to the regional follow-up and review, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) measured progress on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region through a baseline report.[1] In the report, objective and feasible target values for the region are estimated using available data to establish a baseline and assess the gaps that need to be closed if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved by 2030.[2] For over one third of the Goals, existing data show a slow or stagnating progress since 2000. For another third, the data suggest that the region is moving in the wrong direction, and only for one third is the region on the right path to achieving the set Goals by 2030.

3. The Asia-Pacific region has made significant progress in one third of the Goal areas. In respect to Goal 1 (No poverty), between the periods 2000–2004 and 2010–2013, the proportion of the population living in poverty decreased from 29.7 to 10.3 per cent. For Goal 4 (Quality education), in 2014 primary net enrolment was more than 90 per cent, with the fastest observable progress in South and South-West Asia, where between 1999 and 2000 primary net enrolment increased from 75 to 90 per cent. As regards Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth), Asia and the Pacific has outpaced the world as a whole in terms of economic productivity. In respect to Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), between 2000 and 2015, manufacturing as a proportion of value added grew by 30 per cent in the Asia-Pacific region, compared with only 10 per cent for the world as a whole. For Goal 14 (Life below water), between 2000 and 2016, on average across the region the proportion of the total territorial waters under protection increased from approximately 8 to 31 per cent at the country level.

4. Progress has been slow or even stagnant since 2000 with respect to Goal 2 (Zero hunger), as reflected by the fact that, in 2015, of the world's 795 million undernourished people, nearly 500 million lived in the Asia-Pacific region. Regarding Goal 3 (Good health and well-being), in 2015, 86,000 women in the region died from pregnancy- and birth-related causes (28 per cent of the global total). As regards Goal 5 (Gender equality), in 2015, only approximately 18 per cent of seats in national parliaments in Asia-Pacific countries were held by women. Data on Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation) are a worrying cause of concern as, for example, 59 per cent of people in South and South-West Asia are still exposed to poor sanitation. Assessment of progress on Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy) shows that over 400 million people in the Asia-Pacific region still have no access to electricity. In respect to Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), between 2003 and 2014, the prison population in Asia and the Pacific grew from 3.2 million to 3.4 million.

5. For several Goals, the scenario has worsened over the past 15 years. This is true especially for the Goals that were not addressed by the Millennium Development Goals. Stronger efforts need to be pursued with respect to Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced inequalities). Inequality has increased in seven countries, affecting 2.75 billion people, and decreased in 14 countries, affecting 1 billion people. Regarding Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), over the period 2008–2013, of the 24 Asia-Pacific countries that had data on the concentration of dangerous fine particulate matter, of

[1] *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2016: SDG Baseline Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.F.1).

[2] The analysis uses national values for 30 per cent of the proposed global Sustainable Development Goal indicators to assess regional achievements for each Goal in the baseline year 2015. It applies a subset of these indicators to illustrate the progress made since 2000 and progress needed to meet the 2030 targets.

2.5 micrometres in diameter or less, only Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Maldives and New Zealand were under the level of 10 micrograms per cubic metre of air that is recommended by the World Health Organization. Data relating to Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production) indicate unsustainability of current practices: between 2005 and 2015, the total material footprint more than doubled, from 27 billion to 46 billion tons. In respect to Goal 15 (Life on land), between 2000 to 2016, 48 out of 57 Asia-Pacific countries experienced a loss in biodiversity.

6. As part of the follow-up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda, member States are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress (voluntary national reviews) at the national and subnational levels – the critical levels for implementation, where governments are accountable to their citizens – guided by the principles defined in the 2030 Agenda.[3] These principles indicate that the follow-up and review processes should be voluntary and country-led; track progress in implementing the universal Goals and targets, including the means of implementation, in all countries in a manner which respects their universal, integrated and interrelated nature; be inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people; and be people-centred and gender-sensitive and respect human rights.

7. At the country level, the major value added by these national reports is the opportunity to unite the main stakeholders towards a single ambitious project and to take stock of the different initiatives to plan, implement and follow up on the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. At the global level, through the presentation of the voluntary national reviews, the countries have the opportunity to share success stories, best practices and challenges with peers and collect key innovative solutions to support the national follow-up and review process and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

9. Also at the global level, the high-level political forum on sustainable development is the central follow-up and review platform tasked with assessing progress, achievements and challenges faced by the member States that use the platform to present their voluntary national reviews. The report of the Secretary-General on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684) included in its annex a proposed set of voluntary common reporting guidelines, which contained suggested components to help countries to frame the preparations for voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum. These guidelines are useful to promote consistency and comparability between voluntary national reviews and from one year to the next. The regular reviews by the high-level political forum also provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

10. At the regional level, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is the pre-eminent platform for the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific region. It serves as a regional preparatory meeting for the high-level political forum and continues to strengthen support for national and global implementation and reporting efforts. This regional platform provides opportunities for peer learning and for cooperation among countries on a range

[3] See General Assembly resolution 70/1.

of issues related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda.

11. Furthermore, the Commission, in its resolution 72/6 on committing to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, requested the Executive Secretary to, among others, promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and provide annual updates and recommendations to member States, and strengthen support to member States in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda in an integrated approach. In its resolution 73/1 on a conference structure of the Commission aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the Commission decided that the terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development would include supporting the follow-up to and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level by supporting the presentation of voluntary national reviews.

12. Building upon this regional architecture, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development provides a platform for member countries that have or will be presenting voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum to share their experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

13. In 2016, the Governments of the first batch of countries delivered reports on their voluntary national reviews, five of which were from the Asia-Pacific region (China, Georgia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Samoa). These initial voluntary national review reports highlighted the need for financial and technical assistance to improve statistical systems and for regional support to facilitate technology transfer, knowledge-sharing – in particular in mobilizing the private sector – and sustained cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and recalled the importance of civil society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

14. At the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development that was held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017, addressing the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", the Governments of 43 countries presented voluntary national reviews.[4] From the Asia-Pacific region, 12 member States volunteered to report, representing the four main Asian subregions: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran,[5] Maldives and Nepal (South and South-West Asia); Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand (South-East Asia); Japan (East and North-East Asia); and Azerbaijan and Tajikistan (North and Central Asia). Together, they represent almost 50 per cent of the Asia-Pacific region's population and one third of its total gross domestic product.

15. The present document contains a summary of the main messages of the reports submitted by the Governments of the Asia-Pacific countries participating in voluntary national reviews in 2017 and collected in the section on the high-level political forum of the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform website.[6] General characteristics and commonalities within the region

[4] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2017.

[5] The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted a main message, but not a full report.

[6] The reports are available online. For more information, see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/inputs/ and https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf.

with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are highlighted in the synthesis and an outline is given of policy measures and institutional mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans and strategies, follow-up and review processes and means of implementation. Also summarized in the document are the challenges that the countries presented in their voluntary national reviews in several areas of the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda, such as data collection and analysis and financing mechanisms.

16. Peer support at the regional level to share experiences and lessons learned with neighbouring countries can help member States overcome the challenges described above. In this regard, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development supports countries in: (a) sharing progress with respect to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; (b) sharing completed, ongoing or planned national-level follow-up and review; (c) discussing any clarifications that countries may provide on the necessary steps to prepare a voluntary national review, including sharing understanding on the format and process; (d) identifying regional commonalities and lessons learned from follow-up and review and voluntary national review preparations undertaken so far; (e) learning about the available data and technical support required to assess progress with respect to the implementation of the Goals; and (f) learning how to undertake meaningful stakeholder engagement in the follow-up and review process.

II. Voluntary national reviews in 2017: processes for the implementation, follow-up to and review of the Sustainable Development Goals

A. Institutional mainstreaming and national mechanisms

17. The Governments of many reporting countries in the region have mainstreamed the Sustainable Development Goals into their national planning: some have designated focal points for implementation of the Goals; some have revised and aligned their national development plans to support the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda, or are in the process of doing so; and some have already aligned the Goals and their targets and related indicators with their national plans and objectives.

18. It can be noted that the Governments of reporting countries from Asia and the Pacific have been mainstreaming the Goals into their national planning in similar ways.

19. The Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan has been designated as focal point for implementation of the Goals. Moreover, the nationalization process is happening through a concerted action of various stakeholders and under the coordination of the High Council of Ministers. The nationalized targets and indicators for the Goals have been allocated to eight different budgetary sectors, which has required the Ministry of Economy to work closely with the line ministries accountable for each budget. To ensure smooth coordination among different institutions, the National Coordination Commission was appointed superintendent body, providing a platform for inclusive and sustained cross-sectoral engagement. However, institutional capacity is still insufficient in some areas, as public security, and social and economic constraints affect the political environment and jeopardize the political will to attain the Goals.

20. In Nepal, three high-level committees comprising representatives from both the private and the public sector, along with civil society organizations, have been formed to support implementation of the Goals in national policymaking. Since the new Constitution was approved in 2015, the Government has embarked on a new federal governance structure that encourages the mainstreaming of the Goals into provincial- and local-level budgeting and planning.

21. The Government of Azerbaijan will revise all governmental development plans and align them to support the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda into national planning. The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development has been established to ensure inclusive stakeholder participation; mainstream the Goals and translate the respective targets and indicators into the national context; identify national priorities along with gaps and opportunities for sustainable development; develop inclusive and rights-based national strategies and policies; ensure horizontal policy coherence; and harmonize and coordinate reporting and review frameworks. The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development is supported by four thematic working groups that cover economic growth, environmental issues and monitoring and evaluation, and has the power to establish an additional four thematic working groups.

22. In Bangladesh, the 2030 Agenda has been integrated into national planning in the seventh five-year plan, which runs from 2016 to 2020. Responsibilities and ownership of 2030 Agenda have been clearly defined at the ministerial level to ensure Goal policy implementation. To enhance synergies and formulate effective action plans, lead, co-lead and associate ministries have been mapped out against each Goal target and the Annual Performance Agreement was introduced as a results-based performance management system, to assess the assimilation of the Goal targets into the programmes and projects delivered. The Government has prepared an action plan to achieve the Goals in line with the seventh five-year plan, to ensure alignment with the Goal targets. In addition, the Sustainable Development Goal Implementation and Monitoring Committee has already been created at the Prime Minister's Office level to facilitate Goal coordination and implementation.

23. The Government of Thailand has assigned responsibility for the Goals to the National Committee for Sustainable Development, which includes a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including from civil society and academia, in the consultation. The "sufficient economy" principles that constitute the guiding development framework in Thailand have been integrated with the Goals into the 20-Year National Strategy Framework and the Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017–2021), to ensure budgeting and priority alignment throughout all governmental bodies and agencies.

24. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the National Committee for Sustainable Development was elected as focal point for Goal policy coordination, implementation and reporting, and has been responsible for the stakeholder consultation for the voluntary national review reporting process. To this end, the National Five-year Development Plan provides for an interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism to mainstream the Goals into national planning. The Islamic Republic of Iran is also currently developing a national sustainable development strategy to promote integration of the Goals into national development priorities, focusing chiefly on water, environmental conservation, poverty eradication, equal opportunities and job creation.

25. In Indonesia, the Long-Term Development Plan, which spans from 2005 to 2025, already includes most of the Sustainable Development Goals, and most of the Goal targets and related indicators are already aligned with the national objectives. In addition, a National Sustainable Development Goal Coordination Team, supported by the Sustainable Development Goal Secretariat, has been established to ensure horizontal as well as vertical coordination and comprehensive stakeholder participation. In India, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) – the main governmental policy think tank, chaired by the Prime Minister – is leading implementation of the Goals. Following a principle of "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas" ("Collective Effort, Inclusive Growth"), it advocates active participation from all Indian states in developing road maps for effective and long-lasting enforcement of the sustainable development agenda. Indicators for tracking the Goals have also been developed in consultation with the Ministry of Statistics. Similarly, Malaysia has initiated the development of a national Sustainable Development Goal road map to maintain a holistic view of the Goals, which are included into the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016–2020).

26. Japan established the Sustainable Development Goals Promotion Headquarters in 2016, headed by the Prime Minister, which is a new governing body responsible for leading the process of achieving the Goals and enhancing cooperation among all ministries and governmental agencies. The Cabinet adopted the Sustainable Development Goal Implementation Guiding Principles, which represents the country's national strategy for achieving the Goals, identifying eight main priorities for the country: capacity-building and empowerment, healthy living, innovation and inclusive growth, resilience, energy security, environmental conservation, national security, and means of implementation.

27. The Government of Tajikistan, in its National Development Strategy (2030) and Midterm Development Programme (2016–2020) has identified four main areas and related Sustainable Development Goals – namely energy security (Goal 7), communications infrastructure (Goal 9), food security (Goals 1 and 2) and green growth (Goal 8) – that will be used to prepare the ground for more comprehensive and substantive achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Localization of the Goals is a priority, as well as data disaggregation, to meet the demands of vulnerable groups. Goal indicators at the country level will be introduced to better monitor progress.

28. In Maldives, it is the National Ministerial Coordination Committee, constituted of cabinet ministers, with the support of the Technical Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, that embodies a guiding role and provides political support towards implementation of the Goals. While different agencies or institutions as well civil society organizations are all accountable for achieving the Goals, the overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the process lies within the Sustainable Development Goals Division at the Ministry of Environment and Energy, which promotes policy integration and broad stakeholder consultation. The Government of Maldives strongly believes that continued political support and broad-base participation are at the core of the 2030 Agenda.

B. Creating ownership

29. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are described as key to mobilizing and sharing knowledge, technological expertise and financial resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Countries of the Asia-Pacific region have been actively raising awareness on the review of the Sustainable Development Goals and the voluntary reporting at the high-level political forum through the organization of workshops, symposiums, conferences and forums, as is the case in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Japan and Thailand.

30. Wider participation of stakeholders, compared to the experience with the Millennium Development Goals, has been encouraged across the region. Some countries have put special emphasis on the involvement of minority groups, such as women, youth, refugees and internally displaced persons. However, coordination and alignment of interests among relevant partners and institutions is crucial.

31. The Government of Afghanistan has adopted an inclusive approach, conducting around 50 workshops with national and international stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, youth, students, the media and women's groups. Wider participation of stakeholders has been encouraged using the principle of leaving no one behind and through the adoption of a whole-of-society approach – as defined by the Government of Bangladesh in its voluntary national review – which aims at ensuring a wider participation of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the media and civil society organizations in the Goal implementation phase so that the whole society is represented. The Government of Nepal also reports positively on organizing a series of workshops and summits to strengthen partnerships with the private sector, cooperatives, civil society, development partners and the international community to meet the large capacity-building needs.

32. The Government of Azerbaijan is also working towards an inclusive participation level to achieve the Goals. Local mass media and civil society organizations are engaged to secure outreach to all societal segments, and emphasis is placed on the involvement of minority groups such as women, youth, refugees and internally displaced persons. Furthermore, an interactive web platform is being created to ensure a participatory process of consultation on the Goals, as well as for monitoring and reporting mechanisms. In Tajikistan, a series of consultations at the national and regional levels was conducted, with broad participation of stakeholders, such as governmental experts, including sectoral- and local-level specialists, United Nations agencies, parliament members, civil society, academia, entrepreneurs and the media, as well as representatives of development partners. An increased level of participation of civil society is regarded as the way forward in implementing and achieving the Goals at the national and regional levels.

33. The Government of Japan established the Sustainable Development Goal Promotion Round-table Meetings, comprising a wide range of stakeholders. The round-table meetings were held to draft the Sustainable Development Goal Implementation Guiding Principles, as well as to prepare for the voluntary national review. Furthermore, to give more incentives to the private sector to work towards the Goals, the Japan Sustainable Development Goals Award initiative was put forward. At the time of the submission of the voluntary national review report, public awareness on the Goals was still lagging behind in Japan. For this reason, the Education for Sustainable Development programme was launched to involve young people and

encourage learning about the Goals in all settings, including schools, households, workplaces and local communities.

34. Similarly, the Government of Maldives is initiating the work of identifying national priorities for the Goal targets through a process of consultations with implementing agencies, civil society and the private sector. The National Bureau of Statistics is also carrying out a mapping exercise of data gaps in dialogue with broad societal representation. The Government of Maldives also conducted focused awareness sessions, targeting parliamentarians, local councils, members of the judiciary, students and non-governmental organizations.

35. The Government of Thailand reports on a series of stakeholder engagement activities that led the civil society and other entities to propose and make substantive contributions to the 2030 Agenda in accordance with their respective roles and expertise. Global Compact Network Thailand and other private entities are also active in mainstreaming the Goals and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework into business operations.[7] Civil society organizations held their own regional forums on the Goals to present their views, concerns and priorities, and have produced their own voluntary national review report to supplement that of the Government. The Government's report was developed with the guiding concept of learning from the communities.

36. The Government of Indonesia regards broad stakeholder involvement throughout the process – from the planning to the implementation, as well as the monitoring and evaluation phase – as being among its national strengths. For the voluntary national review, for instance, which was conducted in several stages, stakeholders were involved through offline and online public consultations in the development of metadata on the Goal and guidelines for formulating national and subnational action plans. Active multi-stakeholder engagement was encouraged through the establishment of implementing teams and working groups within the Sustainable Development Goals National Coordination Team. A system to ensure transparency and accountability was also established: all the outcomes of the offline consultation were communicated through email, the website of Sustainable Development Goals Indonesia (http://sdgs.bappenas.go.id) and social media. All stakeholders are involved not only in the implementation of the Goals, but also in determining the direction of that implementation.

37. Stakeholders are also involved in the Goal coordinating mechanisms, as in the case of the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development in Azerbaijan or the National Committee for Sustainable Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which coordinated the efforts of the Sustainable Development Steering Council, the parliament, local governments and communities, academia, municipalities, civil society, the private sector and United Nations agencies.

38. Reflecting the country's commitment to the Goal agenda at the highest levels of government, the Indian Parliament organized several forums, including the South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in February 2017 and the Speaker's Research Initiative launched to provide Goals-related insights to Members of Parliament. The

[7] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=428&menu=3170.

forums focused primarily on ways to eradicate poverty, as a prerequisite to sustainable development, and on gender equality, climate change and resource mobilization for the Goals.

C. Integrated reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals

39. Several reporting countries from Asia and the Pacific addressed progress on the cluster of Sustainable Development Goals that were under review at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017, which included Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17. Many of the voluntary national reviews highlighted the interconnected nature of the Goals and the interlinkages between them. Increased efforts to provide capacity-building to policymakers on such interlinkages and integration between Goals were therefore identified as a key enabler in several of the voluntary national reviews.

40. The process of mainstreaming the Goals and aligning them with national priorities has provided the opportunity for reporting countries to identify interlinkages between the Goals and the ways in which these interlinkages can be leveraged to accelerate progress across national planning with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For instance, in its report, the Government of Nepal emphasizes that the Goals should be prioritized based on their impacts and interlinkages with other Goals. The Government of Japan, in its voluntary national review, affirms that the Goals and related targets are indivisible and should therefore be attained in an integrated manner.

41. The Government of Indonesia emphasizes how improvements in nutrition and food availability (Goal 2) are connected to education (Goal 4), health (Goal 3) and environmental conditions, and stresses the necessity to improve access to education and to clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), reduce malnutrition and famine and ensure that no one is left behind. The report also contains a discussion of how the country needs to focus on achieving progress in the industry, innovation and infrastructure sectors (Goal 9) in tandem with increasing efforts in the sustainable protection and utilization of marine ecosystems as alternative natural resources that are not currently adequately utilized (Goal 14). In order to address these interlinkages, key enabling factors are needed, such as strengthened partnerships in various sectors, better data and increased financing support. Moreover, supplementary efforts need to be focused on providing capacity-building for all actors to implement the Goals in an integrated manner.

42. The Government of India also highlights the interconnections between the different Goals. Rapid growth (Goal 8), which it defines as the key weapon in any country's arsenal to combat poverty, creates well-paid jobs, which place the necessary purchasing power in the hands of households to access food (Goal 2), education (Goal 4) and health (Goal 3) and have direct consequences on poverty eradication (Goal 1). Moreover, generating equal employment opportunities (Goal 5) and ensuring basic access to services such as clean water and sanitation (Goal 6) are also regarded as prerequisites for ending poverty in all its forms (Goal 1).

43. The Government of Maldives has incorporated the Goals into policy documents and action plans with a view to addressing the linkages between the Goals. For instance, the National Food Safety Policy (2017–2026) is in line with Goal 2, targeting the elimination of hunger, achievement of food security and improvement of nutrition, taking into account other Goals related to health,

poverty, gender equality, water and sanitation, responsible production and consumption, and climate change.

44. Ensuring energy security and efficient use of electricity will allow for an integrated approach to the implementation of the Goals in Tajikistan. In the report, energy security is considered instrumental for the elimination of poverty (Goal 1), health care (Goal 3) and changes in hydrological regimes resulting from climate change (Goal 13). At the same time, some of the priorities for long-term development in Tajikistan are those set under Goal 2, including food security, quality of nutrition and development of agriculture. Goal 2 is in turn linked to the accessibility of affordable and reliable energy.

45. The countries covered in the present synthesis report agreed that the 2030 Agenda is universal, holistic and indivisible, and expressed the view that understanding the interlinkages between the various Goals and targets, as well as the ways in which these interlinkages can be leveraged, is a key step towards implementing the 2030 Agenda and accelerating progress across multiple objectives. At the same time, it is clear how challenging this exercise may be with the current lack of capacities, funding and data.

III. Challenges: financing, data and reporting

A. Financing

46. In most cases, satisfactory financing mechanisms still need to be identified and explored. Member States recognize the need to mobilize both internal and external funding for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Even though for some countries national budgets will be the main source of financing for implementation of the Goals, foreign investment and other more innovative ways of financing will still be necessary.

47. The Government of Bangladesh stresses the necessity to find innovative ways of financing the 2030 Agenda, taking into consideration both the private and the public sector, and national as well as international partners. Especially for countries such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the unstable political situation or external threats to peace and national security pose severe limits to existing financial mechanisms. Notwithstanding, member States recognize the necessity to mobilize both internal and external funding for the achievement of the Goals. The Government of Tajikistan, for instance, recognizes that even though the national budget will be the main source of financing for implementation of the Goals, foreign investments will be necessary.

48. The Government of Malaysia also intends to mobilize national and foreign resources, including of a financial nature, through partnerships and international cooperation. Mechanisms like public-private partnerships, crowdfunding, philanthropy or corporate social responsibility programmes are being contemplated as viable sources of liquidity.

49. The Government of Indonesia is similarly scrutinizing alternative ways of financing implementation of the Goals, in addition to working towards strengthening cooperation between Governments, financial institutions and the private sector. For instance, the Government has finalized guidelines for enhancing and encouraging green financing and green banking systems. The Financial Services Authority carries the responsibility to support sustainable financing methods. Alternative financing methods, like philanthropy and business or religious social funds, are also being considered. The Government

of Nepal has assigned codes relating to the Goals for all national programmes to ensure adequate finance mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

B. Data and reporting

50. Data availability and access to reliable and scientifically sound data is considered a major barrier by almost all reporting countries. Coherent and holistic mechanisms for regular data collection are critical factors that can influence the quality of the data collected. This is also linked to the availability of funds, internal capacity and other resources to overcome the lack of data. On the one hand, data collection, analysis and dissemination represent a hurdle to the implementation of the Goals; on the other, the Goals provide an opportunity for cooperation in data development in itself.

51. The Government of Maldives pinpoints lack of training and technical expertise for data collection and management as well as inadequacy of funding for the data collection process as major challenges to implementation of the Goals. The Government of Nepal also indicates a weak statistical database and the lack of availability of data disaggregation as factors that risk hindering the monitoring process, which is also affected by the lack of a quantitative baseline for many Goals and their indicators.

52. Data disaggregation is also posing challenges in Indonesia, where full responsibility for data collection and accountability lies with Statistics Indonesia. The Government of Indonesia has already developed 87 out of the total 241 global indicators, as well as 234 proxy indicators to ensure alignment with national priorities. Nevertheless, several disaggregated data indicators are still lagging behind.

53. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has given the Statistical Centre of Iran a special mandate to ensure the adequacy of data collection. However, owing to inconsistencies among Goal indicators and the current national monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the collection of data has been challenging. The Government of Azerbaijan has appointed its State Statistical Committee as the main authority for measuring the national progress with respect to achievement of the Goals, but difficulties in aligning the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets and indicators to national priorities have also been encountered. Harmonization of Goal indicators is identified as a further issue that needs to be addressed with urgency. A system of Goal indicators for monitoring and reporting that can be easily and smoothly translated into national priorities is regarded as a valuable solution.

54. The Government of Bangladesh reports full data availability for 70 indicators and partial availability for another 108; a gap remains for the remaining 63 indicators. Collaboration at the bilateral, regional and global levels is regarded as a way forward to bridge the data availability gap and share best practices. The Government of Maldives also indicates improved intergovernmental cooperation as a way forward with respect to data accessibility and integration, and the Government of Tajikistan stresses the importance of cross-sectoral and transboundary coordination mechanisms to ensure the adequacy of data.

IV. Commission support to voluntary national review countries

55. The present document contains a description of how addressing the 2030 Agenda in an integrated and inclusive manner can be a demanding task. It is emphasized that, along with the delivery challenges towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, attention also needs to be paid to the means of implementation. At the same time, a description is given of how the voluntary national review process provides an opportunity for reporting countries to identify priority actions areas as well as areas of early progress in implementation of the Goals. Asia-Pacific reporting countries have applied different strategies and analytical frameworks to identify domestic priorities and goals and translate them into national policies.

56. Regional follow-up and review can provide a natural nexus between the national and the global levels, by supporting constraints and challenges in the review architecture at the national level. Regional follow-up and review provides a congenial space for discussion, fosters regional collaboration, can address cross-boundary issues (including targets and Goals that require transboundary approaches) and supports peer learning and capacity-building.

57. Follow-up and review at the national level can be supported through technical assistance at the regional level to endow member States with enhanced capacity to implement, monitor and follow up on the Goals. The regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific provides a framework for such assistance as it focuses on a set of priority areas that support the effective pursuit of sustainable development by member States.[8]

58. The rapid response facility established by ESCAP provides quick and effective responses to countries in respect of different thematic areas and priority issues of the regional road map. In 2017, missions related to the rapid response facility were strategically deployed to countries that have committed to delivering their voluntary national review reports in 2018.

59. Through the rapid response facility, ESCAP is supporting countries with their voluntary national reviews by identifying and addressing gaps in Goal data and statistics (including visualization), and supporting integrated systems analysis to help understand interlinkages between the Goals and identify policy priorities, among others. Recognizing that data and reporting are critical for effective implementation of the Goals, ESCAP is supporting countries in addressing the need for broader and more detailed and disaggregated statistics through technical assistance activities to facilitate the production and use of integrated statistics.

60. These ongoing initiatives are strengthened through ESCAP support with respect to stakeholder engagement, which builds the capacity to strengthen existing processes through multi-stakeholder committees, national round tables and the expansion and deepening of engagement in all aspects of implementation, including in the development of voluntary national reviews.

61. Furthermore, ESCAP is working towards increasing awareness of the challenges and opportunities regarding resource mobilization for sustainable development and the need for strengthened efforts in resource mobilization at

[8] Commission resolution 73/9.

all government levels and broad-based cooperation and coordination among countries to work together in addressing common and cross-cutting issues.

V. Matters calling for the attention of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

62. Member States may wish to reflect on the experiences and challenges of countries in developing their voluntary national reviews and provide further guidance with respect to support from the secretariat.